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# Modern Dutch Poetry

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*in English translation*  
by HANS KONINGSBERGER



# Modern Dutch Poetry

*edited and translated into English*

by HANS KONINGSBERGER

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HOLLAND, MICHIGAN

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## Modern Dutch Poetry

The almost universal image of the solid sober Dutch is, to many Dutchmen, a distorted picture. The poetry which follows here should do something to shake its hold. In Dutch art as in Dutch literature there are powerful currents of mysticism, surrealism, experimentalisms of all kinds; and except in the voluminous bestsellers, there are no tulips, wooden shoes, windmills or other attributes of the "Dutch scene" in its cozy or watery aspect. Unfortunately, Dutch is for most of the world a secret language.

His limited audience — some fifteen million people — is a real tragedy for the Dutch writer and not merely a financial one. He longs for a sounding board of dimension. He must make himself a place amidst a storm of influences from all countries, for Holland has no hard core of regional culture. It is adaptable and open, internationally minded, with an urban culture based on tolerance and commerce. Its literature has innumerable links with writing abroad.

In modern Dutch literature it is probably poetry which is most important. It is a new poetry, reborn in the eighties of the past century under a late but strong English influence and since then proceeding along many different roads: a poetry of people who have read Yeats, Rimbaud, Eliot and Thomas in the original. Yet it has emerged with some qualities which may be called typically Dutch. It is, first, strongly

HANS KONINGSBERGER is an Amsterdam-born writer who has been living and working in the United States since 1951. His novel *The Affair* was published by A. A. Knopf, Inc. Other translations of his include Maria Dermout's *The Ten Thousand Things*, published by Simon & Schuster, Inc.



pictorial, with a high sense of color — in the best tradition of Dutch art. The poet is a draftsman more than a minstrel. Second, it is typically Dutch because it is written in Dutch.

Of all living languages, Dutch is one of the closest to English. Dutch and English have the same parents, and if it had not been for the fighting Danes and William the Conqueror we might still be able to get along without translators. As it is, the following poems can be read only through that channel and this unavoidably lessens their quality. Yet the closeness of the two languages should counteract the terrifying problems of translating a poem.

In this anthology we have tried to present as many sides of modern Dutch poetry as possible. To set the stage, the book opens with the "eighty-ers" who around 1885 led the revival expressed in the opening line of a poem of one of them in these words:

*"A new spring, and a new voice is heard \*\*\*\*\*"*

From there on the book leads in about forty poems to the early fifties of the present century.

The order in which the work is presented is roughly chronological, according to the poet's period of production; with contemporaries the actual date of birth has been the deciding factor.

The selection was of necessity a subjective one, and length or unsurmountable problems of translation made inclusion of some of the finest poems impossible. Thus, obviously, no pretense is made that the poets represented here are more important than others not included.

This anthology contains a translation by James Brockway, one by A. Roland Holst and one by Adriaan J. Barnouw, as

indicated. The other poems were translated into English by me, and are thus mine and not the poet's responsibility. In fact, it is a safe assumption that some of them will make the original authors rather unhappy.

The sonnet translated by Mr. Barnouw is from his book *Coming After*, in which more and also earlier Dutch poetry in English translation can be found. Excellent English translations are also available of some of the many Belgian poets writing in Dutch.

Nine of the translations in this anthology and part of my introduction were published in the eighth issue of *New World Writing* of the New American Library.

HANS KONINGSBERGER



## WILLEM KLOOS

### Sonnet

I always think of you as of a dream  
In which, all through the long blest night, a face  
I never saw smiles at me with a grace  
No words can paint, till at the first shy gleam

Of the pale morning sun, the tears still stream  
From half-awake eyes. And into empty space  
I sigh my grief that dreams do not retrace  
The traveled course of their alluring theme.

For all lies caught in an eternal sleep,  
A sleep on which no morning ever dawned,  
And life is but a dream of dreadful fright  
Which night will chase into the lightless deep.  
But in that dream a dream of song and light:  
My dream, so gladly hailed, so sadly mourned.

(TRANSLATED BY ADRIAAN BARNOUW)

WILLEM KLOOS, who lived from 1859 to 1938, was one of the "eighty-ers," whose magazine *The New Guide* he founded. An introduction written by him to the work of another poet became the unofficial Declaration of Principles of the group.



## HENRIETTE ROLAND HOLST

We were born on the break of the times  
and our eyes have witnessed endings  
of old worlds now paling and dying,  
new vows have opened our lips wide  
and in our hearts desire is breaking  
toward the dreams of once escaping  
toward new dreams with blossoms bursting  
thus we go through bitter years wanderers,  
it is always a struggle a lacking:  
all moves in us as on a tide  
sometimes ebbing as though we had died.

HENRIETTE ROLAND HOLST, who lived from 1869 to 1952, was the most important woman poet of her time. Strongly social-minded, she was a member of the Socialist and Communist parties until, disappointed by a journey to Russia in 1921, she adopted a religious socialistic idealism. Her extensive work contains splendid verse to which translation can do little justice. The lines above are from *The New Birth*, which was published in 1902.

## AUGUSTA PEAUX

### The Boat

With the wing of an eagle, so wide,  
the sail of the boat on the stream  
strikes to death the sun in the room  
and all that remains is a gleam.

The sail like a moving hand  
has wiped out the sunlight's fall  
that streaked through the window-glass  
and played on the yellow wall.

In the stately sail is a threat  
and sense of a word of beware  
which for the briefest of spells  
destroys the mood that was there.

But all is so quickly passed  
the light so shortly disturbed,  
that looking up, we have not seen  
and the sense of the word is not heard.

AUGUSTA PEAUX, 1859-1944, was a woman poet of individuality and strength, writing in a period of transition. "The Boat" was published in 1926 in *New Poems* (Tjeenk Willink, Haarlem).



PIERRE KEMP

## Night Desire

The gentlemen towers greeted me last night!  
The moon flew broad and white. The air was good  
like green liqueur assembled in the dell.  
The wide sound sounded that is called a bell.

The blue thighs of the houses glowed.  
The round breasts of the bridges flowed.  
A name was swelling from each side  
Beyond my searching eyes. Woman! they cried.

## Critical

The light has forced me to a plight  
to live,  
Before I give myself  
to plight that to the light  
I'd like to know whether it's the same  
as darkness that burst into flame.

PIERRE KEMP was born in the South of The Netherlands in 1886 and was a mining official there for many years. He is noted as a creator of highly personal poems full of surprise and vitality. "Night Desire" was published in 1934, "Critical" in 1946 (both in *Anthology*, Van Oorschot, Amsterdam 1953).

N. VAN EYCK

A dark house  
In darker green—  
Mutter of water and melody  
From tree to tree.

Above the door  
A window's light—  
Silence of stars and blossom scent,—  
The door is tight.

And no one came.  
The endless wait,  
Stagnant dream of that pallid flame!  
Around, the night.

Strange house; for none  
The door undone.  
For the wanderer, far in the night,  
Only the window's light.

N. VAN EYCK, who lived from 1887 to 1954, was from 1935 his death, professor of Dutch literature at the University of Leyden. He stood close to Baudelaire in his belief that "poetry is the sovereign and perfected means to the spiritualization of human life." "A Dark House" was published in 1922 (In *Introduction*, Hyman, Kroese & Zande, Arnhem).



WILLEM DE MERODE

## The Dream

This is a dream which I have never ended:  
I am a blossoming branch under the stars  
Which I see in the water beneath me.

I see: I blossom amidst stars.  
And slowly floats a yellow moon  
Within my perfume, and sinks in my bloom.

The milky way is split in two broad streams,  
They have surrounded me and carried  
Me without shock far from my origin.

C. BLOEM

## Dapper Street, Amsterdam

Nature is for the contented or the empty,  
And then, what can we boast of in this land?  
A hill with a few small villas set against it,  
A patch of wood no bigger than your hand.

Give me instead the sombre city highways,  
The waterfront hemmed in between the quays.  
Clouds that move across an attic window,  
Were ever clouds more beautiful than these?

All things are riches to the unexpectant.  
Life holds her wonders hidden from our sight,  
Then suddenly reveals them to perfection.  
I thought this over, walking through the sleet,  
The city grime, one grey and drizzly morning,  
Blissfully happy, drenched in Dapper Street.

(TRANSLATED BY JAMES BROCKWAY)

WILLEM DE MERODE, living from 1887 to 1939, once a grade-school teacher, came to be a poet whose strongly personal flavor was of Calvinistic origin. "The Dream" was published in his *Poems* (Holland Co., Amsterdam 1952).

C. BLOEM, born in 1887, has written relatively little poetry, but his simple and often noble style has had great influence. In 1953 he was awarded a state prize for poetry. His *Collected Poems* were published by Stols, The Hague, in 1947.

A. ROLAND HOLST

## Day of Reckoning

Lonely and wild and cold and passionate—  
can that still be the sea? What ultimate power,  
what final token of that turbulent realm  
of blinding, empty and unending light  
now claims the waters?—Deserted are the coasts,  
forgotten the high dreams of bygone worlds.  
Like the loud brazen cymbals of fate and reckoning  
the beating waters toll, in onset come  
against the world, and high out of the west  
from the steep ramparts of the dead are heard  
the passionate, the lonely, the wild and cold  
chords of the harps that herald the last day.  
The great, raised by the prelude of this storm  
out of their mortal trance, now calling come  
to man's remaining strongholds, and are seen  
on the dark western bastions, stern and gaunt,  
and pointing to the fateful mystery  
of doom and ruin. The spokesmen of our days  
bore names, but these bear no names, being trumpets  
condemning all that is to the ancient shadows  
of what has been, primeval night, before  
the faces out of the spirit's world on high  
appear, agaze, with voices jubilant:  
cold and impassionate and wild and lonely.

(TRANSLATED BY THE POET)

A. ROLAND HOLST, who studied at Oxford, made his poet debut in 1911, when he was twenty-three years old. Yeats and the myths of Ireland influenced his work, which conquered him a first place among Dutch poets. Always greatly interested in English, the above is one of his own translations into that language.



VICTOR VAN VRIESLAND

## This Child

This child has died while young: seven years.  
He was so full of confidence in life  
That he did not understand his dying,  
Familiar with himself and with most creatures  
Non knowing toward men but not indifferent.  
While on his small bed he was lying  
His cheeks were tanned still from the sun.

VICTOR VAN VRIESLAND, born in 1892, studied French literature at the University of Dijon, became a novelist and poet as well as critic and editor of many Dutch literary magazines. Van Vriesland, chairman of the P.E.N. for Holland, is a stimulating figure in the literary life of that country. His anthologies of poetry are indispensable to the student, and have been of great help in the preparation of this collection. Van Vriesland has also written French verse. His poetry is untranslatable to a high degree.

NIJHOFF

## The Song of the Foolish Bees

A scent of higher honey  
embittered us the flowers,  
a scent of higher honey  
has driven us away.

That scent and a soft humming  
in the sky-blueness frozen,  
that scent and a soft humming,  
not-named repeatedly,

called us, poor reckless creatures,  
to give up our green gardens,  
called us, poor reckless creatures,  
to a rose of mystery.

Far from our life and people  
have we after adventures,  
far from our life and people,  
been chased jubilantly.

No one who can by nature  
well interrupt his passion,  
no one who can by nature  
endure death bodily.

Succumbed forever farther,  
shone through forever brighter,  
succumbed forever farther  
to the elusive sign,

We uprose and we vanished,  
debodied and abducted,  
we uprose and we vanished  
all bright and glittery.

It snows and we have died now,  
Softly falling homeward,  
It snows and we have died now,  
It snows between the hives.

MARTINUS NIJHOFF, who died in 1953 in his fifties, stood the borderline between two generations—a modern poet who knew the good old days. He was not only a poet but also playwright and critic, translator of Euripides, Shakespeare and Eliot. His thought and his language have exercised a vast influence on Dutch poetry. "The Song of the Foolish Bees" was published in *New Poems*, Querido, Amsterdam 1946. The rhythm of the original has not been maintained in the translation.

## ENDRIK DE VRIES

I was in my earliest years  
Always alone with my thoughts;  
Waking in endless long nights,  
And the sorceress who descended  
To the water-bowl daily,  
Nursed there a transparent brood,  
Floating like halfdying kobolds:  
Evil plants which she later  
Slipped in the garden, and robbed  
Of their eyes. On the hollows,  
Weaved over with raggedy spinings,  
Crusts grew. And from their cracklings  
She gathered the white-curdling blood.

Sat her small daughter sadly  
Under the bower. Her lashes  
Were closed against the green glitter,  
Always then I wanted to linger,  
But the woman chased me, more cruel  
Than ever man I have met with.  
—Now once more I saw the daughter.  
Cloaked very severely,  
Steep, with her eyes abashed,  
She entered an ancient temple



Where no man is allowed to know her.  
Who accosts her must be condemned  
To die on the very same day.

Tomorrow I'll wait on the threshold.  
Possibly, if the streets are abandoned,  
I will speak to her the first word.

## ENDRIK DE VRIES

Over the fire the soup is cooking.  
Now is the hour when toys start spooking.  
Everywhere happen the strangest things.  
In the cellar a peacock weeps or sings.  
Towers are tolling: this is that hour!

The trees are scowling with indignation  
At the street lamps' illumination.  
In the branches hangs a giant trout.  
A cloud has put the moonlight out.  
A dwarf is peeking from the spire.

Now thieves are going with heavy sacks.  
Our house may flounder: the roof-beam cracks.  
What was that noise? A horse has neighed.  
For arson all you need is a spade:  
Under the world glows a steady fire.

ENDRIK DE VRIES. Born in 1896, poet and painter, De Vries lives in the North of Holland in a countryside as Dutch as imaginable. Here he writes his own kind of poetry: secret visions, wild and weird stories of death, gypsies, sorceresses and magic; and translates *coplas* from his favorite country, Spain. "I Was In My Earliest Years" was published in 1937 (in *Atlantic Ballads*, Stols, The Hague); "Over The Fire" is from *Magic Garden* (Stols, The Hague 1948).

HERMAN VAN DEN BERGH

## For this Summer

Only our souls can guide the summer  
across the paths and to the final goal:  
we are the makers and we make it  
into our blessing, blessing whole.

And they will go, the dreamers, and announce it  
with their strong living and their shouted joys  
and they will celebrate, they will pronounce it  
with silence, with their hushed cries of bliss  
and they will go, the love-filled ones through noon  
and each will carry in his secret eye  
a heaven, each will hear within his heart  
the choral for all happiness rise high.

And they will go, the reapers, at the utmost  
noon, when the red fruits are steaming  
they will go home and strike the melody  
of the ripe fall, the harvest teeming,  
of the tanned tribes, sown on the wide terrain,  
singing the melody, the hardy melody  
singing the light and the sheaving of grain:  
they who believe in the fate of this earth!

HERMAN VAN DEN BERGH, born in 1897, studied law. He published his first verse in 1917. After a few highly influential years he stopped writing poetry and has since confined himself to his work as a newspaperman. "For This Summer," typical of the Expressionism he introduced from Germany, was published in *The Bow*, Ploegsma, Zeist.

J. SLAUERHOFF

## Coast of Guinea

The horizon is glimmering with lights,  
and softly the ship cuts the spatter.  
The copra gets moist in the hold,  
the captain grows fatter and fatter.

The stars are climbing the width,  
my heart goes out to their flicker!  
In deck-chairs the gentlemen rest  
and try to hold on to their liquor.

The sea is so good and so big,  
but the ship so narrow and mean  
the days so grey and mealy.

And sea life is better seen  
on the beach with your back on a towel  
than by being a seaman really.

J. SLAUERHOFF, who lived from 1898 to 1936, studied medicine and later became a ship's doctor. His debut as a poet was made in 1923 with *Archipelago*. Slauerhoff, the "last great romanticist in Dutch poetry," was a wanderer, violently rebelling against a complacent bourgeois world. His verse is as difficult to translate into English as Kipling's (to whom he is akin in spirit), to translate into Dutch. The *Collected Poems* were published in 1948 by Stols in The Hague.



H. MARSMAN

## The Sea (From: Temple and Cross)

"Who writes, must do it in the spirit of this sea  
or not at all; here lies the moonstone reef  
that will endure when we are set on by the flood  
civilization drowning like Atlantis;  
only here the winged beat of light  
touches the skyline of the threefold continent  
that gives our song the fair irradiation  
of softest ivory and blackest wood,  
and to the scent of roses in our glass  
it adds the vinegrown ecstasies.  
here waves the night of dionysian barks  
which from the Pillars to the Hellespont  
and from Damascus to the Etna rowed;  
here sprang the fountain to its culmination  
and threw out rainbows to the shores  
of mosque, of temple and of cross.  
here the high voice has held the heart,  
Odysseus in enchantment bound,  
and Solon giving Athens law;  
and in the breakers of these shores  
was wrecked the pride of Rome and Babylon.

as long as Europe is alive  
and, bleeding, dreams the reckless dream

in which the crosswood sprouts like vine,  
is this the source, moves on this sea  
the lightning spirit of creation."

HENDRIK MARSMAN, 1899 to 1940, studied law and worked for a short time as a lawyer. His *Poems*, 1923, were a literary event, and he soon became one of the dominating figures of his generation. He was the stimulating editor of a critical magazine and of great importance as a renewing influence in Dutch letters. He was killed in June 1940 while trying to escape to England after the German invasion of the Lowlands. "Temple and Cross" was his last work, an endeavour to find harmony between pagan and Christian ideas. He saw his "Sea," the Mediterranean, as the center of Western culture for which he sought to point out a new road. His *Collected Works* were published by Querido in Amsterdam.

## JAN ENGELMAN

Soft burning of her tender waist—  
A white satin, a rocking  
for these accustomed hands  
with her skin interlocking

in one beat and by the pulsing  
of blood driven to their end.  
That voice, that stammering:  
who are you?—And deepest blend

the twin star, her eyes, refound  
in the waves and in the smolder  
of her hair, streaming unbound  
on her white neck, and this shoulder.

JAN ENGELMAN was born in 1900 and became an important poet in the group of Roman Catholic writers, as well as an critic of name. He writes light and playful verse and also "poés pure": a man who believes the ivory tower is the only place for a writer to live. This poem is from *Sine Nomine*, Gemeenschap Utrecht 1930.

## J. KELK

Tonight the park is Japanese,  
the children are of veil—  
like signals cast in silver  
are the flowers in their trail.

With swerving and with skipping  
butterflies try a dance,  
While the tired nightingale  
sings in devout seance.

A bench was put out on the grass—  
in flames the lights have ended,  
strange violet and fearsome red.

A prayer that the flowers said,  
a prayer that has come to pass:  
the moon has in the leaves descended.

J. KELK was born in 1901 and is critic, novelist, poet and co-editor of several literary magazines. He is a temperamental and humorous defender of the pleasures of life, against the pessimists of modern literature. This poem is from *Playride*, Stols, Brussels 1931.



## ERIC VAN DER STEEN

Now that the summerstars are gleaming  
the valley is cooler than the height  
but in the depths the dark comes sooner  
no ferry would cross without a light  
two children with small white hats on  
are carefully stepping into the boat  
it was the dark which made me think  
I saw two water lilies float.

ERIC VAN DER STEEN, born in 1907, is the pen-name of a poet and journalist, a "combination of lyricism and soberness". This poem was published in the magazine *Vrije Bladen* in 1947.

## MANUEL VAN LOGGEM

### Zell Song

Let us go thingward  
The path to the origin,  
There the light rushes from  
There sounds the bloodgong.

Reeds are a hairy edge,  
Mountains like fountainheads,  
Blossoms like planets,  
Streams running red.

Earth is a yellow cave,  
Lust like desire,  
Satyr a world god,  
Sighing like song.

Let us go thingward  
Mountains like springs,  
There our blood rushes from,  
End in all-being  
Like you began.

MANUEL VAN LOGGEM was born in 1916. He has written several novels and plays in addition to his poetry, which was published in one volume, *The Shell* (Boek & Courantmij, Amsterdam 1947).

GERRIT ACHTERBERG

## Behind the End

The wind and her clothes still lay together  
but it was over;  
somewhere against the stars  
the riddle had exploded, but who can believe  
such an ending for what began  
uniting the elements in one,  
in one grip, within one blood?  
beginning so  
that I did not know  
that its why I could not understand  
save that it could have no end  
but in eternity.

## The Black Spring

In the sun death is beginning,  
starting the sweet devouring,  
overrunning darkly the warm fields.

On naked roads with pious feet we go.  
Its majesty has pierced us  
and somewhere defeat has been suffered.

And every woman is willing  
to mix her blood with the black suns  
rising from the edges of our blood.

Oh spring, sun-drunken and overrun darkly.

GERRIT ACHTERBERG. Although celebrating his fiftieth birthday in 1955, Achterberg is very much one of the modern poets, and a man outside all groups. He is unique on the Dutch literary scene by having lived from the writing of poetry and poetry alone. "Behind the End" was published in 1931, "Black Spring" in 1944 (In *Old Cryptograms*, Querido, Amsterdam 1951). The rhyme scheme of "Black Spring" has not been reproduced in translation.



CLARA EGGINK

## The Tenderness Which is Silence

Silence, on moonlight strings a tree-finger stirs.  
The wingbeat of the owl is a thought of sound.  
Her cry does not discharge the stillness.  
Far to the west the seafoam is sighing.  
The ground holds itself up in wetness and fruitful.  
And two,  
    who in tenderness have become almost mist, say:  
Silence, we love.

Silence, the first grass is once more covered by snow.  
A furtive dark animal sneaks on the twilit white  
and warns without a sound.  
The moon stands wild and wobbling in the wind.  
A sea holds itself up in long-drawn billowing.  
And two,  
    who in their warm fear have become almost glass, say:  
Silence, we must die.

CLARA EGGINK, whose poetry has been called "sober feminine variations on the romantic longing," was born in 1906. This poem was published in *Edge of the Horizon*, Arbeiderspers, Amsterdam, 1954.

MOK

## The Dutch Railway Strike Against Germany

(1944)—FRAGMENT

It happened as if on the shores of time  
an age opened its white perspective,  
deep in his hearing man perceived  
a calling which his voice could never match.  
Mouths and eyes then collected  
vibrations of light, happiness  
swept their thinking in repeated gusts  
upward blowing from the ground of the world.  
Staggering under their visions  
did they walk; like a roaring fire  
lay the future of mankind before them,  
the conflagration hit their faces:  
the clenched power which had held  
itself prepared within time's horizons,  
a fistlike forest, where the light  
erupted in a white-sparked hail.  
Never with such fierce senses  
did any generation meet its life,  
never have hands in such emotion  
stroked the blue tension of the sky,  
never have mortals hazarded that far  
in water where no bottom can be struck,  
or finding rest in their own balance,  
have stood like birds in the azure.

MOK, born in 1907, started as an office worker. His epic poem "Railway Strike," of which this is a fragment, was published after the war by the Arbeiderspers in Amsterdam.



## VASALIS

### Fragment I (From: Faces and Views)

She walked along the beach as through a shuttered house  
the mistress of a mighty prince who lost his throne  
until she sat, and slowly stroked the stone  
of a dark blue quay, broad bluish blocks  
covered with rough hard whitened pox  
like the gooseflesh of a frightened giant—  
to become familiar by stroking and seeing  
with what once she had thought to know  
in its being. She was as one learning to speak,  
like a deaf-mute she placed on the throat of the sand  
the palm of her hand, and she felt the weak mutter,  
looked at the waves while her lips were moving  
but no sound was heard. She could utter  
no name.

### Fragment II (From: Faces and Views)

Before I am reborn it has to darken  
and become wet and small.  
On she walked, but the light remained  
and still no rain fell to wet her.  
Then in the dunes a wonder met her:

a lamb which had just drunk a tiger,  
a bird which had swallowed a serpent  
and a meek man having eaten the flesh of the tyrants.  
They sat speechless and senseless.

The bird accosted her:  
We went through the backdoor of paradise  
into the mistaken country.  
The snake has with its poisoned tail  
cut the bolt, pointed the trail,  
the backdoor is defeated,  
the circle is completed.  
Now the lamb is bloody with stains,  
the bird sings with a cloven tongue,  
the meek has the murderer in his veins.

VASALIS. Vasalis is the pen-name of a talented woman born in 1909, who combines the professions of psychiatrist and poet. Her first verse, which appeared in 1940, immediately created a great impression by its culture and mastery of language. These two fragments are from her latest book of verse, *Faces and Views*, which was published in December 1954 (by Van Oorschot, Amsterdam).



E. HOORNIK

From the Concentration Camp Dachau

Dachau or world—what name I say,  
I know now that they are the same  
This knowledge strikes me dumb and lame  
Though I would rather die, I stay

And my legs walk in two braces  
I am Icarus but wingless  
and I burn but to extinguish  
and I touch but women's faces.

Like a bat I am suspended,  
In ridicule my body bended,  
But then relights my soul's desire  
And in the dark I find God's fire.  
I feel my nature lost and gone  
All soul I am, all fiery sun.

EDUARD HOORNIK, born in 1910, has been a journalist since 1933. In 1936 he made his debut as a poet with a book of verse which was strongly social in tone. He is now working as a poet and playwright. In 1942 Hoornik was arrested by the Nazis and sent to a concentration camp. Several poems inspired by this experience were published in one volume *After Many Years* at Daamen, The Hague in 1955, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Holland's liberation. This is one of them.

N HANLO

The Beautiful Ginger-Jar

Once I used to look at your  
Rounded dreamlips

Now I have bought  
A round ginger-jar

But never  
Will it teach me to sing.

N HANLO, who was born in 1912 in the (then) Dutch East Indies, is one of the experimentalists, characterized by the *Podium*-series he received in 1951 as "the most neglected poet of the year." Holland Co. in Amsterdam publishes his verse.

ADRIAAN MORRIEN

A Girl

I am too weak to keep up life's renewal  
within myself, my blood is too speechless; see  
my fearing hands and see my lap  
injured by shame, surprised and narrow.

My breasts are small, breasts of adornment,  
I wear them singing under my thin silk  
leave me my time in this exemption  
of innocence and youth, I am too young

ADRIAAN MORRIEN, born in 1912, is a poet, critic and novelist, and co-editor of several literary magazines (which in Holland have as hard a struggle to survive as anywhere else in the world). This poem was published in 1946. (In *Homeland*, Bezige Bij, Amsterdam).

BERTUS AAFJES

In the Beginning (Fragment)

He went in the still unnamed morning  
With his long legs and his dangling arms,  
His breast was young and fresh with fervency,  
His eyes were open to the things,  
His lips were hanging on the almost calling,  
Until the names came spurting from his mouth  
Like limpid water spurting from the deep.  
He had but named yet next to nothing,  
He let the things come through his eyes and enter  
And dive into the fountain of his soul  
Like naked swimmers, fast and smooth and many,  
Who through the water in the water became  
Like water: all-spirited water beings,  
Teeming and moist with originalness,  
Swarming within the water's clearness,  
Sowing fingers and toes through the depths,  
Sending up air bubbles of expectation  
And almost bursting under the surface  
Of unpronounceability, then suddenly cutting,  
Foaming, climbing, rushing into sound,  
Hewing a path to the roof of the mouth,  
And shiveringly crying a cry, a name.  
And Adam cried a cry, a word, a name.



And Adam sounded from naked foot to head.  
Words he brought forth, stark naked of sense,  
As naked as he was in the beginning.

BERTUS AAFJES was born in 1914. He is one of the most important in the Dutch Roman Catholic circle of poets. When his long poem, "Wayfarer to Rome," appeared in 1946 it met with immediate response and was read far beyond the limited public usually interested in poetry. "In the Beginning," from which the first verses are printed here, was published by Querido in Amsterdam.

L. VROMAN

## Like Water

I had, I thought, many centuries  
a house on the silent ocean,  
could sometimes hear the laugh  
of the gulls playing on and away.

In that first one hundred years  
rose the waterclear water,  
rose the rhine wine from the cellar,  
and from there, a hundred years later,

it came over the top of my table  
sparkling in thousands of ways  
in the sun and all my papers  
which I had collected around me  
floated slowly to the horizon.

A hundred years later my hair stirred  
and there was no more wind.

Strange to find myself again living  
after another one hundred years,  
with wine and work and the time which climbs  
up out from the cellar and on.

LEO VROMAN, born in 1915, is a novelist, poet and biologist, working in the U.S. This poem is from the collection, *Poems*, published in 1946 by Querido in Amsterdam.

BERT VOETEN

## Weekend

I like to be saturdaynights  
in a city with shoulders of light  
and hundreds and hundreds of posters  
the rainy voice of the doves  
the murder and firemen sirens  
calypsosingers an empty  
hackstand a man from Burma  
waitresses in cafes  
a window display of tombstones  
the tunnelmouth of a bridge  
water and stone and dreaming  
and an almost unnoticed pain  
a pain which does not bear naming  
a pain a train-platform at night

BERT VOETEN, born in 1918, was formerly a journalist; since 1945 he has been working as a writer and translator (of, among others, the plays of Christopher Fry). This poem is from *Because of Tomorrow*, published by Bezige Bij, Amsterdam in 1953.

L. TH. LEHMANN

## Winter in the Slums

The little girls who swim here in the summer  
in baggy bathing suits or in their slips,  
haven't got used yet to the winter,  
are warm as feathers and light as the float

of the angler in the rickety small boat,  
an outpost with its colors lowered,  
behind rotting wood eyes are prepared  
for the silent phalanx of the alleys.

But when the frozen filth no longer smells,  
the wood is petrified by teeth of ice  
and craggy holes are smoothed out by the snow,

then with their skates in heavy straps the girls go  
to where the ice has lost its brownness,  
and light as bats they draw their secret hieroglyphs.

L. TH. LEHMANN, who was born in 1920 and studied law in Leyden, made his debut as a poet with the book *Day and Night Noise* which was published in 1940 by Stols, The Hague, and from which this poem is taken. Its unusual form, as a rhymeless sonnet, has been maintained in translation.



## GUILLAUME VAN DER GRAFT

### Hallelujah

Let us sing with a vengeance  
let us sing over sea  
let us sing against uphill  
against the slowness of until  
against the years, let us sing  
over the water in deep water  
and against the rocks

I will said the bird I'll sing  
Against what I asked against what  
Against the earthquake  
I don't know about that said the bird  
Against the thunder along the roads  
Against the breakers of the sun?  
It had already flown away  
It had already gone

let us sing I said  
let us sing, not speak  
I will said the voice from the houses  
a voice drawn and quartered  
against what I asked against what

but the houses were silent  
the houses were hiding a silent yawn

against space I insisted  
against the sea and the Endless  
but the houses made a row  
along the road I had to go  
to torture me

let us sing I said  
against talking and silence  
against the stillness made by the earth  
let us have children  
with bodies of music  
and limbs made of words  
let us sing

I made a round with my love  
like the organ grinder's monkey  
but everyone was handy  
with a penny or a candy

I asked God who made no sound  
the sky knew of nothing  
the light started running  
it turned out to be rounded  
round like a mouth  
but I was confounded

Then I will call out for men  
 let us sing against the sea  
 should that have been my beginning  
 let us sing join the singing  
 against money and against the gods  
 let us be sacrilegious  
 let us sing for the deaf ones  
 let us be superfluous  
 let us stop ruling fast  
 for the first shall be the last  
 let us sing I say: Oh my—

Oh my tongue Daniel in the den  
 between the teeth of the lions  
 let us sing let us caress  
 oh my tongue Daniel  
 let us eat and drink and dance  
 for tomorrow we live.

GUILLAUME VAN DER GRAFT. Born in 1920, Van Der Graft is not only a poet but also a Protestant minister. Although he continues to work in the two fields under different names, there is—according to himself—no conflict between the one and the other. This poem is from his book of verse, *Birds and Fishes*, Holland Co., Amsterdam 1953.

## ALFRED KOSSMANN

### Aria

You ask why does she cry? She cries from surfeit.  
 She was born in Rotterdam North  
 Between a shop tropical fish and a shop margarine,  
 Opposite a shop tricks jokes photographic art.  
 Her mother had brought from the country  
 the puritanism

Of superstition, of God who punishes,  
 coming home on time

And every girl has a treasure she can only lose once,  
 But from the city she had taken the opera

Of broken motherheart

This is the end and the melting embrace

Of a screaming child.

She was the oldest, she dragged around the babies

And has a longing for their seriousness

About digestion, candy pennies,

The body activities of the young and very old,

Their warm unreasoning, their high laugh,

their sleeping together

In a bed of obscene secrets,

Their talking like animals.

ALFRED KOSSMANN, who was born in 1922, is a poet and novelist, and also works as a journalist. This "Aria" is from *Apology of The Pigs*, Querido, Amsterdam 1954.



GERRIT KOUWENAAR

## The Language

Birds are owning the language  
I am too man to fly  
I stand on the world like a building  
constructed and thick from earth

I am just about the person  
who would fit inside of the walls  
and flow out behind the windows  
of the drawing room on the rear

it smells there of love and compost  
a plant is put up in a cage  
birds are owning the language  
and man hides away in the word—

GERRIT KOUWENAAR, born in 1923, made his debut as a writer with two experimental novels. Later works proved him to be one of the important young writers. His verse to date was published in 1953 under the title *Behind A Word*, by Holland Co. in Amsterdam.

HANS LODEIZEN

## For Father

father we have been together  
in the slow train without flowers  
which puts the night on and off  
like a glove we have been together  
father while the dark slammed us shut.

where are you now gone for a ride  
in the gay little breeze of a green car  
or did not the day put her glove  
on a table where twilight and soft  
healing are certain to come.

my lips my tender lips closed.

(HANS LODEIZEN)

All those things happen and they are  
well taken care of: the children  
playing at the edge of the pond  
a horse plowing the earth  
and the train in the landscape.

even the water that in talkative  
restlessness rolls in its shores  
where the houses smile while a boat  
floats away like a wisdom  
is lost in the reality.

thus we are standing, fishers  
for revelations until  
the night from the water  
rises and with all her riddles  
takes up the sky.

HANS LODEIZEN. Lodeizen (1924-1950), writing in a "purified language," made his debut in 1949, only one year before his death. More verse was published posthumously. He has rightly been called "the potentially greatest" of the generation of the fifties. The two poems printed here are from a volume of poetry published by Van Oorschot in Amsterdam, 1952.

## LUCEBERT

### Harvest

night. The summer now dies in the night  
cramping feathers are falling. shrinking the circle  
clouds are choking the mountains  
in the village is whisper and lips are sounding

never before did golden eyes reach such distance  
in the blinking wood the sleepers are crouching  
and silvery nets cover the autumn sea

so soft a game is the rainfall  
that fruits in desire are dropping  
and hands are opening a cross  
has been kissed and a knife and the thirst  
have been quenched in the fires of darkness

## (LUCEBERT)

The way with the lightish mist  
The way with the heavy mist  
The way with the tender wind  
The way with the cruel wind  
The way in the tepid night



The way in the night that  
Shivers up to its neck  
The way still like a blind man  
The way moving wildly  
Like wheel of fortune  
The worked away way  
The way which is worked on  
Nothing never does go straight  
To the clear palpitating space

The horse gallops his mane moist  
The bird flies its wings full  
Man dies with a thirst

LUCEBERT is the pen-name of a poet and graphic artist born, like Lodeizen, in 1924. He was editor of the magazine of the Experimentalists, which ran for two years. He is now widely considered the leader among the young poets of Holland. These two poems were published by Stols, The Hague, in 1952 and 1953.

## HANS ANDREUS

For figures of sound  
I would want to be  
in the workshop of words  
in the reddish street of a tongue

Light as love  
and with a bag full of death on my back  
I am a longshoreman  
or I pursue like a dancer flamingos

I want to bewitch  
living beasts plants and men  
I want to be a spelling  
and a breathing system of sound

HANS ANDREUS, born in 1926, published his first poetry in 1951. He has been co-editor of, and contributor to several literary magazines. He usually makes his home in France. This poem is from *Italy*, Stols, The Hague 1952.

REMCO CAMPERT

## Sun and Moon

I may be as shy  
As I want to. Post meridiem  
When the evening has teased  
Afternoon out of the way  
By hiding his day face  
In a black mask, whispering:  
I will kill you. Ante  
meridiem when the morning  
Shivering dives in the pool  
Of the day, scream and whistle.  
I may be as shy as I want to.  
From mouth to mouth  
Sun and moon follow  
My trail. And around me  
People are chattering. The earth  
Will take my shyness  
In silence, the way  
I would want it.

REMCO CAMPERT, born in 1929, co-editor of a magazine of experimental poetry, is a poet in the group of the "Fifty-ers." This poem is from *Birds Do Fly*, Holland Co., Amsterdam 1951.

ELLEN WARMOND

## Change of Setting

As soon as the day like blackmail  
is pushed under my door  
the red seals of dreams  
are quickly cut by the sunlight knives

wearily houses open their bitter eyes  
and stars fall deadly pale from their course

while the silent guards  
nightdreams and daydreams  
hastily change places  
the firing squads of the twelve  
new hours quietly takes aim.

ELLEN WARMOND was born in 1930. "Change of Setting" is from her book of verse *Trial Garden*, published by Daamen in The Hague in 1953.



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